

Hawkins Horrors by [lani-haluki](#)

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Summary: Six months after the events of season 2, the summer of 1985 is starting for the people of Hawkins. But for El, adjusting to a normal life has its ups and downs. And she and her friends are in more danger than they ever could've imagined...

Hawkins Horrors

It was dark in the void that night. Not that it *wasn't* dark normally, but to El, it seemed more so than usual. Almost as immediately as she fell asleep, her eyes cracked open to see the void, which she'd visited nearly every day for the past almost-two years. Her footsteps were the only thing she heard as she cautiously walked forward, looking all around her for a sign.

And then, from out of the strange hazy blackness, she heard a voice. The voice was soft and familiar as it echoed all around the void, causing a wave of comfort to wash over El immediately.

It was Mike.

As she walked closer, much quicker this time, the tension wafted out of her. He was probably the only person in the world who could affect her that way, aside from maybe Hopper, who was the best father figure she could ask for. It was like magic, the way Mike made her worries fade away and caused her heartbeat to quicken at the very sight of him.

Magic. That was another of the many words she'd learned from him. It hadn't been Hopper who taught her that, despite him teaching her new words every single day. On the first day that the boys had shown El was DnD was (although she still didn't understand what the "D", "n" and "d" stood for), Mike had been the first to tell her what the word "magic" meant.

Of course, it'd been a definition for the DnD version of it. That was how El had interpreted it, and she hadn't believed that another definition existed. But as Max had informed her, magic wasn't just a fantasy for a boardgame. There were different versions of it, and it could be used for all sorts of things. Like the way that she felt when she was with Mike. No, it wasn't the traditional definition of magic. But the feeling was a lot similar to it.

In the distance, El spotted Mike sitting cross-legged on the ground, a supercom in hand as he talked quietly into it. A small smile grew on her face, and her heart fluttered. Yes, *definitely* magic. He was in the

basement of his house, sitting in the blanket fort that he'd made for her back when they were twelve.

It was the position she'd seen him in for the three-hundred and fifty-three days that they'd been separated, along with the many months that followed. Similar to before they'd reunited, Mike talked about his day, filling her in on even the smallest details. Although El was able to go outside the cabin now, it was still something he did nearly every night when they didn't see each other that day. It was reassuring to El, just as much as it must've been for Mike.

They'd become such a huge part of each other's lives, and El couldn't imagine spending a life without him. It'd been torture to go into the void during the year that she was unable to see him in person. The days wore on and on, many of them being downright miserable for El. It helped that she was able to see Mike each night, but in a way, watching him almost made it worse. The only thing she could do was sit and listen to his stories, which were often accompanied with his tears.

Now, the biggest shift was that he was no longer sad. These days when he talked into his supercom, there was a gleam in his eyes that hadn't been there during those three-hundred and fifty-three days. Since he now knew that she was listening, Mike had kept up the tradition of talking to her through the supercom. It was something that both of them appreciated, and although he didn't do it nearly as often as he used to, El didn't care. Listening to him always made her feel better.

On days when she didn't see him, like today, El cherished every word he spoke, even if he was talking about homework or a pebble that had gotten stuck in his shoe. It made it even better now that she and Mike were no longer separated, because there was none of the lingering sadness in his voice, only joy. El no longer felt the urge to cry when she listened to him. Instead, she felt content. And that was a feeling she'd never experienced before.

"And then me and Will went to the arcade to meet up with Dustin . . . but we found out that the game was broken!" Mike was saying, his head bent as he talked into his supercom. "You should've been there. Dustin said you could've fixed it with your powers, but I told him you

definitely *weren't* doing that." He laughed a little, and El's smile grew.

"Anyway, after that we went to get pizza. We all went to that diner on Main Street — the one I said I'll take you to this weekend — and we shared a pepperoni pizza. It was okay." He grimaced, then raised his head, staring directly into her eyes. El's heart skipped a beat. It was always weird when Mike happened to look straight at her, but it wasn't like he could actually see her.

"Sorry, I would've come to the cabin earlier tonight," Mike said, his voice growing softer. "But my mom wanted me to clean out my room when I got home. And she apparently doesn't want me 'sneaking around on my bike at night'." He rolled his eyes, but El could tell that his annoyance didn't last very long, because he resumed talking.

"I'll try to stop by tomorrow morning. At the cabin, I mean. We could go to that carnival I told you about. I think it starts tomorrow, but I'll have to check with my mom first. And then we'll have to convince Hopper — I mean, *your dad* — to let us go." He glanced around him, then yawned. "Well, I guess I should get going. I'll hopefully see you tomorrow." He closed the supercom. "Night, El."

"Night, Mike," El whispered.

She watched as he pushed himself to his feet before walking away from her. The scene faded away from her, drifting into the air like smoke. She was left alone, staring at the spot where Mike had just been. She sighed quietly, feeling slightly disappointed that he'd left so soon but hopeful all the same for what tomorrow would bring. She'd only heard about carnivals from what her friends had told her, but never had she actually *been* to one. The idea was thrilling.

Barely ten seconds after Mike had left, El heard another deep, eerily-familiar voice from right behind her. "Hello, Eleven."

El jumped. Despite not hearing that voice in nearly two years, she'd never be able to forget it. It was ingrained in her nightmares more often than not. It was the voice of a man that she used to think so highly of, who she used to think of as a father figure. But not anymore. Papa had made her feel like a monster, an experiment that no one could ever care about. She used to believe that *he* had cared

about her, but that had all changed when she met Mike.

Fear building inside of her, El slowly turned around, coming face-to-face with the tall man that was Dr. Brenner. *Papa*. A chill went through her. She felt her body begin to shake, and she took a step back. "Papa? You're . . . you're *dead*."

Dr. Brenner smiled thinly. "Oh, Eleven. I'm *far* from dead. Do you really believe that I am?" That made El freeze, and he began to circle around her. "I see you've changed quite a bit. What a shame." He eyed the hair on her head with slight distain, and El frowned, self-consciously touching her head.

"You're dead," El repeated, narrowing her eyes in her most intimidating gaze.

Even as she said it, she wasn't sure what to believe. Maybe she was just trying to convince herself that he was. Here she was, standing in the void where no one else was able to get in contact with her. Here, El could only observe other people. The only other person she'd held a conversation with while in here was Mama, but that hadn't been a real conversation, either.

But in this situation, Dr. Brenner was talking to her directly, as if he was truly right in front of her. But that couldn't be true. It'd never happened before. Was he actually here, in the void? If he was, it seemed impossible and terrifying all the same. How could he have gotten here if he was dead? Was he dead at all? Or was he just conjured up from her imagination?

"Am I?" Dr. Brenner asked, stopping in his tracks. He walked closer to her, and El, paralyzed with fear, stayed rooted to the ground. She couldn't breathe. "That is very insulting, Eleven. Do I look like I'm dead?"

El swallowed hard. "I . . ." Her voice came out choked and small, and she could barely get another word out. "You're not real. I'm imagining you."

"But I'm in the void, aren't I?" he said, glancing around them. "If I'm here, that makes me real. I am *alive*, and I'm coming to get you,

wherever you've been hiding."

She stumbled backwards. "N-No."

Her former father figure sighed. "You were never meant to get out of the lab. Look what happened to you. You've changed. You believe that the people you surround yourself with care about you, but they *don't*. You are *weak*, Eleven. They've brainwashed you. But I'm sure we both know that you'll never fit in with them, because you belong in the lab. *I'm* the only one who cares about you. I'm the only one that ever has."

"No," El shot back, glaring at him. "That's . . . not true! The lab is *gone*. *You're* gone."

Dr. Brenner smiled at her then, and lifted a hand. Immediately, El flinched away, but felt more surprise than anything when his hand came in contact with her cheek. Instead of fading away like objects and people usually did in the void, she *felt* his hand. He wasn't fading away. He was *still* there.

El's eyes widened, and she opened her mouth to scream. But no sound came out, and her powers wouldn't even work. The last thing she saw was Dr. Brenner's face swimming in front of her before the blackness closed into her vision, and she was swept out of the void.